The
Pagan
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Handfasting Ceremony

Moonchilde

PROPS:

- 1 small table
- 3 matching clay, porcelain,
- or pewter bowls (1 filled with earth, 1 with water)
- 1 white or green candle
- matches
- 1 white cord
- 1 broom

PARTICIPANTS:

- the Celebrant
- the Bride
- the Groom
- 2 Witnesses *(the maid of honor and best man might be good choices, if willing)*

Before the ceremony begins, the Celebrant will place the table in the center of the area designated to be the ritual space. He/she will place the bowls and the candle on the table, lighting the candle.

She/he then invites the Bride and the Groom to join with him/her in the center of the room, next to the table. An alternative part of the ceremony will be noted below if no one is willing to do so.

CELEBRANT:

> We come together today to witness the joining of two lives. Are there two people here who are willing to witness the declarations of intent this woman and this man wish to make?

WITNESS(ES):

> We are willing.

CELEBRANT:

> Come then, and join us here. *(They join the Celebrant, Bride, and Groom. The Bride and Groom stand facing the table with the props. The Celebrant stands between them and the table, and the Witnesses stand off to one side of the table, at right angles to the Bride and Groom.)*

(the CELEBRANT turns to face the audience)

> Our work today is a happy one. We are gathered in the presence of the fruitful trees, the flowing waters, the warming sun and the sighing air, and in the sight of the Goddess of our Blessed Earth to celebrate the joining of our friends (Bride) and (Groom) in union by the fasting of their hands in ancient rite.

(holding up Cord)

> This is the Cord of Handfasting. It will bind (Bride) and (Groom) together with bonds of love. For such bonds to be strong, they need support - not only from the couple themselves, but from the Goddess and God. But most of all, they will need the support of their community of family and friends. When I bind their hands together, please focus on this Cord and let your support flow as loving strength into it.

(holding up Broom)

> This broom is a symbol of the joining of equals. At the close of the ceremony, the newly handfasted couple will jump the broom to exit the circle - but we'll have to yell really loud at them to remind them to jump the broom. You all know how newlyweds are...!

The Bride and Groom join the Celebrant in walking deosil, stopping at each cardinal point, as he/she casts a Circle big enough to encompass the participants and the table with props.

CELEBRANT: *(turning to the East)*

> Be with us here, O Spirits of the East, Spirits of Air, to witness this declaration! With your breath of life, join the bonds between these two and tie them tightly.

(turning to the South)

> Be with us here, O Spirits of the South, Spirits of Fire, to witness this declaration! Give their love and passion your own all consuming ardor.

(turning to the West)

> Be with us here, O Spirits of the West, Spirits of Water, to witness this declaration! Grant these two the deepest of love, richness of body, soul and spirit.

(turning to the North)

> Be with us here, O Spirits of the North, Spirits of Earth, to witness this declaration! Let your strength and constancy be theirs for as long as they desire to be together.

> The Circle is closed.

The Celebrant moves to face the Bride and Groom, between them and the table. She/he turns to the table and takes the bowl with earth in it. He/she then turns to face the Bride directly, and hands her the bowl of earth.

CELEBRANT: *(to BRIDE)*

> The Earth is the alpha and omega of existence. All living things are born of the Earth, and it is through the Earth's mercy that all living things persevere. All beings return to the Earth when Life's voyage ends. Such it is with Humankind - all Humankind is born of Woman, and it is through Woman that humankind perseveres.

> In the presence of the first Sacred Thing, (Bride), I ask you for the first time - if it is your wish to become one with this man, will you pledge your love through all that may come, as long as love shall last?

BRIDE:

> I so pledge.

The Celebrant takes back the bowl with earth in it. He/she then turns to the table, replaces the bowl of earth, and picks up the empty bowl. She/he turns to face the Groom directly, and hands him the empty bowl.

CELEBRANT: *(to GROOM)*

The Air is that which first sustains us upon entering this world when, as a newborn babe, we take our first breath. The Air is the last thing we give back to the world when we leave it. In between, it is the Air that we depend on most to live, and that to which we give the least consideration.

In the presence of the second Sacred Thing, (Groom), I ask you for the first time, if it is your wish to become one with this woman, will you pledge your love through all that may come, as long as love shall last?

GROOM:

I so pledge.

The Celebrant takes back the empty bowl. He/she then turns to the table, replaces the empty bowl, lights the candle and picks it up. She/he turns to face the Groom directly, and hands him the candle.

CELEBRANT: *(to GROOM)*

The Fire which burns in this candle is the same fire that burns in the bodies of all living things.It burns in the Air, but does not consume the Air. It is this same fire which burns in the Sun, and that provides us with the heat and light we need to live.

In the presence of the third Sacred Thing, (Groom), I ask you for the second time, if it is your wish to become one with this woman, will you pledge your love through all that may come, as long as love shall last?

The Celebrant takes back the candle. He/she then turns to the table, replaces the candle, and picks up the bowl of water . She/he turns to face the Bride directly, and hands her the bowl of water.

CELEBRANT: *(to BRIDE)*

The Water is the womb from whence sprung the first beings that crawled upon the Earth. Humankind's ancient fascination with the ocean is a faint echo of that memory. With water to slake our thirst, and the Earth's bounty to fill our bellies, there is nothing more we need.

> In the presence of the fourth Sacred Thing, (Bride), I ask you for the second time - if it is your wish to become one with this man, will you pledge your love through all that may come, as long as love shall last?

BRIDE:

> I so pledge.

The Celebrant takes back the bowl of water. He/she then turns to the table and replaces the bowl. She/he turns to face the Bride and Groom directly.

CELEBRANT: *(to Bride and Groom)*

> Face each other and join hands, please.

> The Spirit which animates the flesh you wear in this incarnation is that Spirit which all living beings share. We are all reflections of the Great Mystery, male and female, human and non-human, animal, plant, and mineral alike. We are all of this Earth, not on this Earth.

> In the presence of the fifth Sacred Thing, I ask you both for the third and final time - if it is your wish to become one with this person, will you pledge your love through all that may come, as long as love shall last?

BRIDE & GROOM: (together)

> I so pledge.

CELEBRANT: (faces the AUDIENCE)

> Are there any here who say nay?

The CELEBRANT turns to the table, retrieves the white cord, and binds the couple's wrists together while they each recite the following in turn:

GROOM : *(to BRIDE)*

> You cannot possess me for I belong to myself. But while we both wish it, I give you that which is mine to give. You cannot command me for I am a free person. But I shall serve you in those ways you require and the honeycomb will taste sweeter coming from my hand. I pledge to you that yours will be the name I cry aloud in the night, and the eyes into which I smile in the morning. I pledge to you the first bite from my meat and the first drink from my cup. I pledge to you my living and my dying, each equally in your care. I shall be a shield for your back. I shall not slander you. I shall honor you above all others, and when we quarrel, we shall do so in private and tell no strangers our grievances. This is my wedding vow to you. This is the marriage of equals.

BRIDE : *(to GROOM)*

> You cannot possess me for I belong to myself. But while we both wish it, I give you that which is mine to give. You cannot command me for I am a free person. But I shall serve you in those ways you require and the honeycomb will taste sweeter coming from my hand. I pledge to you that yours will be the name I cry aloud in the night, and the eyes into which I smile in the morning. I pledge to you the first bite from my meat and the first drink from my cup. I pledge to you my living and my dying, each equally in your care. I shall be a shield for your back. I shall not slander you. I shall honor you above all others, and when we quarrel, we shall do so in private and tell no strangers our grievances. This is my wedding vow to you. This is the marriage of equals.

The Celebrant turns to face the Witnesses directly. If there are no Witnesses within the Circle, this address will be omitted.

CELEBRANT: *(to Witnesses)*

> You have heard this man and this woman declare of their own free will and in the presence of the Five Sacred Things their pledge to share the rest of their lives with each other, and to honor the other above all as long as love shall last. In our faith, no oath could be more binding. I ask you to remember that this man and this woman, your friends, have made this pledge and that in witnessing this, you have a duty to remind them of this day if ever they should stray from their professed intent.

CELEBRANT: *(to Bride and Groom)*

> In the presence of the Five Sacred Things, and three times over, you have each of your own free will professed your wish to share the rest of your lives with each other and to honor each other above all in front of three witnesses.

> It is not for anyone here to judge your decision. I will say only that the Laws of Karma, and you yourselves, can judge how well you each honor your pledge.

> Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be the shelter to the other.
> Now you will feel no cold, for each of you shall be the warmth to the other.
> Now there is no more loneliness for you.
> Now there is no more loneliness.
> Now you are two bodies, but there is only one life before you.

> Go now to your dwelling place to enter into the days of your togetherness,
> And may your days be good and long upon this Earth.

> An it harm none, so mote it be!

The CELEBRANT unbinds their hands. The BRIDE and GROOM join the CELEBRANT as they walk widdershins around the circle, stopping at each cardinal point. Meanwhile, the two WITNESSES get the broom and proceed to the point in the circle so that the BRIDE and GROOM will jump the broom facing the audience.

CELEBRANT:

(turning to the North)

> We thank you, spirits of Earth, spirits of the North, for coming to witness this declaration. Let your strength and constancy be theirs for as long as they desire to be together.

(turning to the West)

> We thank you, spirits of Water, spirits of the West, for coming to witness this declaration. Grant these two the deepest of love, richness of body, soul and spirit.

(turning to the South)

> We thank you, spirits of Fire, spirits of the South, for coming to witness this declaration. Give their love and passion your own all consuming ardor.

(turning to the East)

> We thank you, spirits of Air, spirits of the East, for coming to witness this declaration.With your breath of life, join the bonds between these two and tie them tightly.

> The Circle is no more, yet is unbroken.
> All from air into air, let the misty curtain part.
> All is ended, all is done
> What has been must now be gone!
> What is done by ancient art
> Must merry meet and merry part

> AND MERRY MEET AGAIN!

The WITNESSES crouch down, and hold the broom a LITTLE BIT off the ground. The CELEBRANT leads the chant:

> JUMP THE BROOM!

as the BRIDE and GROOM make a running start and jump the broom on their way out.

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